



State of South Carolina  
Office of The Lieutenant Governor

André Bauer  
Lieutenant Governor

Office on Aging  
Curtis M. Loftis Jr.  
Director

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**Aging Issues and Answers #9 – The “Five Wishes”**

By Lieutenant Governor André Bauer

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**Question:** I read an article recently that encouraged people to plan for medical emergencies by completing papers to give their family and doctors directions about what they would want if they were unable to communicate. The article mentioned something called the “Five Wishes.” What is that?

**Answer:** “Five Wishes” is a specific type of advance directive that was created by a national non-profit organization called Aging With Dignity. Advance directives are legally binding instructions for how you want to be cared for if you are ever in a situation where you are unable to communicate your wishes. According to the literature about the Five Wishes Document on the group’s web site ([www.agingwithdignity.org](http://www.agingwithdignity.org)), “Five Wishes is an easy-to-use legal document that lets adults of all ages plan how they want to be cared for in case they become seriously ill. It gives people control over their medical care, as well as the peace-of-mind that comes from expressing their own wishes and knowing those of their loved ones.”

That’s not a bad description, and the Five Wishes document became a legal format – though not the only legal format – for executing a living will and a health care power of attorney in South Carolina in 2005. One thing that makes the Five Wishes format an attractive option for many people planning these types of decisions is that the paperwork for these legal instruments used in the Five Wishes is recognized in 39 states besides South Carolina. In other words, if you fill out the forms in one of those states and then move here – or vice versa – you won’t have to redo them. The Five Wishes forms are available for purchase from the Aging with Dignity organization, but many hospitals, nursing homes and other non-profits will provide them for free.

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**Lt. Governor's Office on Aging**  
Aging Issues and Answers #9

Other standardized forms for livings wills and healthcare powers of attorney that have been approved as legal documents in South Carolina state law are available for free through our Elder Rights program – a part of the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging. State law mandates the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging provide information to South Carolina citizens about advance directives, living wills and health care powers of attorney.

State (and federal) laws also give all competent adults, 18 years or older, the right to make their own health care decisions, including the right to decide what medical care or treatment to accept, reject or discontinue. If you do not want to receive certain types of treatment or if you wish to name someone to make health care decisions for you, you have the right to make these desires known to your doctor, hospital or other health care providers and to have these rights respected. You also have the right to be told about the nature of your illness in terms that you can understand; as well as the right to be informed about the general nature of any proposed treatments, the risks of failing to undergo these treatments, and any alternative treatments or procedures that may be available to you.

For more information about these issues, or to get help with obtaining forms for advance directive or living wills and filling them out, contact the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging in Columbia at 1-800-868-9095 or the regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Office that serves your county.

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[Editors: A complete list of the 10 regional long term care offices that serve each of the 46 counties in South Carolina is included below. It may be helpful to include the contact information for the regional office that serves the county or counties where your publication is distributed at the end of this column.]

**Region 1: Appalachia**

Greenville , SC

Phone: 864 -242-9733

Serving: Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville,  
Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg  
1-800-434-4036 (outside Greenville  
County)

**Region 2: Upper Savannah**

Greenwood , SC

Phone: 864-941-8070

Serving: Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood,  
Laurens, McCormick, and Saluda  
1-800-922-7729 (outside Greenwood  
County)

**Region 3: Catawba - York, SC**

Phone: 803-329-9670

Serving: Chester, Lancaster, York, and  
Union  
1-800-662-8330 (outside York County)

**Region 4: Central Midlands**

Columbia , SC

Phone: 803-376-5389

Serving: Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry,  
and Richland  
1-866-394-4166 (outside Richland  
County)

**Region 5: Lower Savannah**

Aiken , SC

Phone: 803-649-7981

Serving: Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg,  
Barnwell, Calhoun, and Orangeburg  
1-866-845-1550 (outside Aiken County)

**Region 6: Santee-Lynches**

Sumter , SC

Phone: 803-775-7381

Serving: Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee and  
Sumter  
1-800-948-1042 (outside Sumter County)

**Region 7: Pee Dee**

Hartsville , SC

Phone: 843-383-8632

Serving: Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon,  
Florence, Marion, and Marlboro  
1-866-505-3331 (outside Darlington  
County)

**Region 8: Waccamaw**

Georgetown , SC

Phone: 843-546-4231

Serving Georgetown, Horry and  
Williamsburg  
1-888-302-7550 (outside Georgetown  
County)

**Region 9: Trident**

Charleston , SC

Phone: 843-554-2280

Serving: Berkeley, Charleston and  
Dorchester  
1-800-864-6446 (outside Charleston  
County)

**Region 10: Lowcountry**

Yemassee , SC

Phone: 843-726-5536

Serving: Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, and  
Jasper  
1-877-846-8148 (outside Jasper County)

**State Long Term Care Ombudsman's  
Office**

Lt. Governor's Office on Aging

1301 Gervais St., Suite 200

Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 803-734-9900

1-800-868-9095 (outside Richland  
County)